



Address all communications for these columns to the Department Editor Mrs. J. Silone-Yates, President National Association of Colored Women, 2122 Tracy Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

The results of the Federation meetings (white) of the various States are creating much comment as the time for the biennial meeting in June next approaches.

We place before our readers for perusal, comment and discussion, the following letter from Mrs. Leonora Halsted, written for the Globe-Democrat of St. Louis, and appearing in the issue of October 20:

To the Editor of the Globe-Democrat, St. Louis, Mo., October 19.

A meeting of the Missouri Federation of Women's Clubs is to be held a few days hence, at which some important questions in regard to the general Federation are to be voted upon. One of these is an amendment proposed by Georgia, advocating that the general Federation shall be composed exclusively of clubs of white women. Against this Massachusetts has protested, and offers a substitute involving a re-organization of the Federation (a measure that was voted down at the last biennial), but whose main point is that each State should decide its own rules of membership by which it should be admitted into the Federation.

In order to clear the issue from all extraneous questions, the Wednesday Club, of St. Louis, offers another substitute, and has instructed its delegates to present the following:

"That clubs containing colored women should be eligible to the general Federation in those States in which they are eligible to membership in the State Federation."

This brings the matter squarely before the house, and what is Missouri going to do about it? The question has been debated with some warmth in most cases in all the Missouri clubs, and now the State has to decide how she will put herself on record at the biennial to meet next June. The issue cannot now be avoided. Every club did its best no doubt to find a method of evasion, but failed, for the situation is this: Massachusetts sent a colored delegate to the last biennial; the President of the Federation is a Georgia woman; so Georgia says, "This shall not be," while Massachusetts says, "Let each State settle the matter for itself." "No," says Georgia, "that will not do at all. Go my way, or I will secede," and the solid South no doubt will follow Georgia's lead. But Massachusetts will not; she declines the honor; and if the amendment is adopted, Massachusetts, followed by New England, Ohio and Illinois will go out. Either way there seems no choice but rupture, unless one side or the other surrenders, which is not likely, and so a Federation composed of 400,000 women who have worked in harmony before will split into a divided North and South.

It is a great pity, and it seems strange enough that this ancient issue should come up among women to be fought over again, and argued about with the old refuted arguments, as if history were not, and its verdict written large and in blood on the face of the times were invisible to our eyes. But it is said the colored people have equal rights before the law (the burnings and scourgings that are a national degradation being ignored), need we take them into our homes and marry them to our brothers and sons? Would that inevitably follow? Are they so irresistibly attractive that the bringing of a few colored delegates into a business meeting that comes together only once in two years, would immediately disrupt our homes and pull us apart? It is the old argument of Douglass withered by Lincoln before the war, and one of the signal proofs of its futility lies in the fact that since the Negroes were freed their color has grown blacker.

However, this is but the entering wedge, says the Georgians. "Mix the race here and you mix them everywhere." "Not at all," says the Massachusetts folk. "We need not even

admit them to individual clubs." These are composed of persons who move in the same social circle. There are thousands in town who are equal to any one on our visiting list no doubt, but we happen to know these and not those. We don't come in contact with them, and there is no reason why they should join our clubs, be it the Wednesday or any other. But when it comes to a representative meeting, once in two years, of women from all over the country, few of whom ever heard of one another, it is quite a different matter. To draw the color line there, and not only that, but for one State to draw it in spite of protests of other States, is a step distinctly backward, a retrogression to tyranny.

With the consciousness so symptomatic of a wrong cause the other side is there brought forward. Far from being irresistibly attractive, it is argued that Negro women, especially in the black belt, are ignorant and filthy in their personal habits, and that to see them is sufficient to establish their ineligibility. Why, of course, but what has this to do with the case in hand? Aren't there millions of white folk with whom we would not wish to come in contact? Women who live in filthy ignorance would not be apt to form clubs, nor would they wish to join a Federation, nor would they pass the scrutiny of its executive committee. No one claims that it was a person of this class that Massachusetts sent to Milwaukee. On the contrary, even the most prejudiced admit that she was an educated, refined woman. So the props are knocked from under the very artificial feet of this argument.

Others maintain that colored women do not care a bit about the matter; that it is the stubborn obstinacy of Massachusetts that insists on breaking up the Federation even if she has to ransack the State to find colored delegates.

Isn't it better they plead that half a dozen such women should be excluded than that the good work of 400,000 women in harmony should be disturbed?

To this the only answer need be, one man in the right and God make a majority. But it may be added that while there are not half a dozen persons in a generation who become presidents, the possibility that they may is an immense incentive.

To be barred from any position whatever by so superficial and empty a matter as color is an injustice that sinks deeper and retards growth incalculably.

It is our fault that the Negroes are among us. They were brought here by force and kept here under cruel duress. Now, when they try to climb is it our part as women of a Christian nation, to thrust them back saying, "Keep away! Don't touch me! I'll have none of you!"

But there are those quite willing to declare plainly that they don't want colored women in the Federation because they won't have it; that the fact of color stigmatizes a race as inferior and they won't associate with it; that it is a matter on which their minds are made up, and they will brook no meddling with it. Of course, to this declaration of prejudice the only answer is the declaration of principle. The minds of those on its side are made up to, and they have buoyant support in the fact that history proclaims theirs to be the side of victory. The great lesson, not only of our republic, but of the French revolution has been "All careers open to talent." Are we women of America, and its best exponents as we claim, going to throw the weight of our federated strength against those few weak women, whom we, as a race to race, have cruelly wronged, and who yet have climbed painfully to our level? When they have attained against every obstacle the education and refinement

that we have almost been born into, shall we say even then "No; you shan't share the very best of our advantages?" It is incredible.

Happily the largest and most influential club in Missouri has put itself on the right side; not perhaps because its members have no prejudice against colored folk, for many of them were brought up in the traditions of slavery, but because their principles are stronger than their prejudices, and seeing the right, they must fight on its side.

It is the true American spirit. While we fought for the liberation of Cuba we had small admiration or even liking the Cubans, but they were human beings and we would not have them tortured within our hearing.

It was the same way during the civil war. The North was not enamored of the Negro; facts prove indeed that it had far less thought of winning Negroes than had the South, but it fought and bled and died for the cause of freedom, and history records its triumph and the public opinion of the world has but one verdict—that of approval.

This is the crushing reply to those who say that to disregard the color line in such matters as this of the Federation is too ideal a position for practical life. It is an ideal the nation realized forty years ago, and we are going to try to reverse the edict and side with what was justly defeated, what the whole world condemns.

Missouri is now more in the world's eye than for a long time; she will be increasingly conspicuous for the next four years. Now is her opportunity. She was saved by a handful of brave spirits from throwing herself on the wrong side in the civil war; let her now declare her advance in this war of women, forty years after men fought out the issue, and proclaim herself overwhelmingly on the side of justice, equity, principle and right.

It is moved that Missouri instruct her delegates to vote at the biennial meeting for the following proposition: "All clubs, without distinction, may be admitted into the general Federation if they are members of the Federation in the State from which they come."

Second?

LEONORA B. HALSTED.

COLORED WASHINGTON.

Born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, although of free parents, before the war, he received very little schooling, but by perseverance and application he has picked up what might be called a common school education. He began life as a farmer and made a success of it. In 1875 he left the farm and went to Baltimore to take charge of a grocery and produce business there, which he had been interested in financially. In 1881 he sold out his Baltimore business and came to Washington, having in the meantime married Miss Mary Anthony, a school teacher from New Bedford, Mass.

He bought his present place in 1882, and began in the grocery business in Washington. His business has steadily prospered. It is a source of pride to be able to point to his nearly twenty years of uninterrupted success in business in one spot, to say nothing of his six years in Baltimore.

The man who enjoys the unique distinction of being the only colored clerk in Washington in a clothing store is Mr. P. A. Dixon, now with Loeb & Company, dealers in gents' tailor-made clothing, furnishings, hats, etc., at 621 Pennsylvania avenue northwest. Mr. Dixon is as affable a gentleman as one would meet in a day's travel, always deals with customers on the square, and has won the confidence of a large circle of friends, many of whom will follow him wherever he may be located in business.

Mr. Dixon has been in the clothing business twenty years, and what he does not know about clothing is not worth much. He has been a clerk at Sack's, Parker & Bridget's and Eisenman & Co., all first-class houses, and well may it be said to his credit that he can go to work again for any of them should he so wish. The Colored American wishes him a prosperous future and hopes to see him in business for himself before long.

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